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Dramatic Publishing

THE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

by
JAMES ZAGER

An ar se nal of scenes and speeches
from the pen of William Shakespeare.



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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The Shakespeare Project was developed at Arizona State University, workshopped at Northwestern University's National High School Institute and premiered at Parkland College in the spring of 2004. This production was produced by the Parkland College Theatre Department in conjunction with the Department of Theatre at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

CAST

CHORUS.Keia Drew, Chris Daley, Jessie Hausmann,
Aaron Golden
WITCHESAmeena Chapman, Jocelyn Deboer,
Michelle Kritselis
PRINCE HAL. Kevin Wasielewski
HOTSPUR Aaron Bush
KATE SISTERS Leila Haken, Mallory Portnoy
PETRUCIO BROTHERS. . James Schirmer, Kevin Simonds
ROMEO Jon Hill
JULIET Cali Loria
NURSE Anna Schutz

PRODUCTION STAFF

Producer.Randi Jennifer Collins Hard
Director. James Zager
Vocal Coach Jill Walmsley Zager
Set Designer Jaimee Loria
Lighting Designer Thomas V. Korder
Costume Coordinator. Alison Cook
Properties Coordinator Amanda Cohver
Technical Director David G. Dillman
Stage Manager Josh Stewart

Author's Note:

This project has its roots in work that I did with Barbara Gaines, now artistic director of Chicago Shakespeare, during her pre-company Shakespeare workshop period. Thanks to that intensive work I learned that Shakespeare's plays are so beautifully written that they are really quite easy to understand if you just trust the text, and that it is our fear of the heightened form, as audiences as well as actors, that makes it seem so difficult. From this simple idea was born *The Shakespeare Project*, an introduction for actors and audiences to the heightened world of Shakespeare without the usual trepidation.

In addition to choosing some of the best-known scenes in the Shakespearian canon I have tried to find a contemporary lens for each scene through which to view it. It is my hope that this re-contextualization will bring the actors and the audiences closer to the text. When dealing with the speeches, the best approach is to make them a direct conversation with the audience, giving the character onstage a chance to clarify something about himself/herself, or the play he/she is in, to the audience out in the house.

Finally, there is timelessness to all of Shakespeare's works as the ideas and issues expressed in his plays are still relevant today. Until we put an end to war, lose our longing for love, and stop trying to understand the human condition we will return again and again to these incredibly beautiful and insightful works.

Welcome to the project!

THE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

Show Order

Prologue: Hamlet (Act III Scene ii)
Opening: Chorus from *Henry V* (Prologue)
Jaques from *As You Like It* (Act II Scene vii)
Conjuring Scenes from *Macbeth* (Act I Scene iii and Act IV Scene i)
Portia from *The Merchant of Venice* (Act IV Scene i)
Funeral Scene from *Julius Caesar* (Act III Scene ii)
Puck from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act III Scene ii)
Wooring Scene from *The Taming of the Shrew* (Act II Scene i)
Richard III from *Richard III* (Act I Scene i)
Battle Scene from *Henry IV Part I* (Act V Scene iv)
Hamlet from *Hamlet* (Act III Scene i)
Balcony Scene from *Romeo and Juliet* (Act II Scene ii)
Two Sonnets (#18, #23)
Closing: Prospero from *The Tempest* (Act IV Scene i)
Epilogue: Hamlet (Act II Scene ii)

Cast List

Chorus 1, 2, 3, 4
Witch 1, 2, 3
Mark Antony
Referee
Petruccio 1, 2

Katherina 1, 2
Prince Hal
Hotspur
Nurse
Romeo
Juliet

Speeches by Jaques, Portia, Puck, Richard III, Hamlet, and
Sonnets 18 & 23 are divided among the ensemble.

THE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

(The stage is bare except for a 5' x 6' reproduction of the pen and ink drawing of William Shakepeare from the first folio which hangs center stage where it remains, looking knowingly down on us, for the entire performance.)

The COMPANY enters. They are all wearing black from the waist down and sport T-shirts with the words "The Shakespeare Project" printed on them. They take a moment to stretch out and vocalize a bit.

Note: The CHORUS will remain in the T-shirts throughout the production. The other actors change into contemporary tops for their scenes and/or speeches and then back into their T-shirts for the epilogue.

After a few minutes of warming up the houselights go down and the cast forms a circle center stage.)

Prologue

(The COMPANY recites the following to one another, each company member taking or sharing a line.)

[Hamlet: Act III Scene ii]

COMPANY.

Speak the speech I pray you, as I pronounced it to you trippingly on the tongue:

But if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier had spoke my lines.

Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently;

For in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, You must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.

O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags,

To split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise,

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor.

Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: That you o'erstep not the modesty of nature.

For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature;

To show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

(There is a moment of energized silence.)

CHORUS ALL.

Go make you ready!

Opening

(The CHORUS gathers upstage facing the picture of Shakespeare as the rest of the COMPANY exits reciting lines from their upcoming scenes. Once the stage is clear the CHORUS turns as one and charges toward the audience.)

[Henry V: Prologue]

CHORUS ALL.

O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention!

CHORUS 1 & 2.

A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,

CHORUS 3 & 4.

And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!

CHORUS 1.

But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraised spirits that hath dar'd
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object.

CHORUS 2.

For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,

CHORUS 3.

Carry them here and there, jumping o'er times,

CHORUS 4.

Turning th'accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass:

CHORUS ALL.

For the which supply, admit me Chorus to this history;

CHORUS 1.

Who, Prologue-like,

CHORUS 2.

your humble patience pray,

CHORUS 3.

gently to hear,

CHORUS 4.

kindly to judge,

CHORUS ALL.

our play!

[Music Plays]

(The CHORUS rushes to either side of the stage as the lights swirl. A special comes up DC as JAQUES enters.)

[Music Fades]

CHORUS ALL.

But what said Monsieur Jaques?

Will he not moralize this spectacle?

(The houselights glow as JAQUES addresses the audience.)

[As You Like It: Act II Scene vii]

JAQUES.

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances,

And one man in his time plays many parts,

His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,

Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.

Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel

And shining morning face, creeping like snail

Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,

Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honor, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

[Music Plays]

(The center special fades and houselights go out as JAQUES exits. The lights change to blue as the CHORUS brings on a 55-gallon oil drum and sets it center stage. Lights come up on the new scene.)

[Music Fades]

CHORUS 1.

When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.
Where the place? Upon the heath.
There to meet with Macbeth.
By the pricking of my thumbs
Something wicked this way comes.

[Macbeth: Act I Scene iii and Act IV Scene i]

(A forgotten place. Three homeless souls enter in tattered old coats and hats and gather around an oil drum to warm their hands on the small fire within.)

WITCH 1.

Where hast thou been, sister?

WITCH 2.

Killing swine.

WITCH 3.

Sister, where thou?

WITCH 1.

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd.
"Give me!" quoth I.
"Aroint thee, witch!" the rump-fed ronyoncries.
Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' th' *Tiger*;
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And like a rat without a tail,
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

WITCH 2.

I'll give thee a wind.

WITCH 1.

Th' art kind.

WITCH 3.

And I another.

WITCH 1.

I myself have all the other,
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' th' shipman's card.
I'll drain him dry as hay:
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid;
He shall live a man forbid;
Weary sev'n nights, nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine;
Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-toss'd.
Look what I have.

WITCH 2.

Show me.

WITCH 3.

Show me!

WITCH 1.

Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrack'd as homeward he did come.

WITCH 3.

A drum, a drum! Macbeth doth come.

(They start to transform as the fire grows, shedding their old coats and hats revealing their true selves.)

ALL.

The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go, about, about,
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine.

WITCH 1.

Peace, the charm's wound up.

WITCH 2.

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

WITCH 3.

Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whin'd.

WITCH 1.

Harpier cries, "'Tis time, 'tis time."

(They are now magnificently dressed as they circle the burning drum.)

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

WITCH 1.

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw;
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelt' red venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' th' charmed pot.

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

WITCH 2.

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' th' dark
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab.

Add thereto a tiger's chawdron,
For th' ingredience of our cau'dron.

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

WITCH 3.

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of pow'rful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL.

Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble!!!

[Thunder Crash]

(They all grab the rim of the drum as the fire dies down.)

WITCH 1.

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

(They grab their old clothes and exit as they return to their former selves.)

[Music Plays]

(The lights change to blue as the CHORUS strikes the oil drum. A special comes up DC as PORTIA enters.)

[Music Fades]

CHORUS ALL.

And she is fair and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues. Her name is Portia.

(The houselights glow as PORTIA addresses the audience.)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When directing *The Shakespeare Project* the old adage “less is more” could not be more appropriate. In all areas of the production allowing the text to carry the show is not only cost effective but is the best choice artistically as well.

Sets:

A bare stage with the picture of Shakespeare flying above is ideal, but the picture itself is not really necessary. When we toured the show we were very successful performing in any empty space that was provided to us.

Props:

Use only what is absolutely necessary. This keeps the focus on the characters and the action of the play. The following is a sample prop list:

Macbeth

55-Gallon Drum or Large Trash Can
Small Bundles Filled with Old Clothes
A “Pilots Thumb”

Julius Caesar

Podium
1 Picture of Caesar's Bloodied Coat
4 Pictures of Caesar's Mutilated Body

The Taming of the Shrew

3 Stools
2 Long Bungee Cords
Championship Belt

Henry IV

4 Sidelights

2 Large Wooden Fighting Sticks (48" long and 7/8" in diameter)

Romeo & Juliet

Sofa

Easy Chair

Juliet's Cell Phone

Romeo's Cell Phone

2 Identical Newspapers

Costumes:

Limit the costumes to three looks: T-shirts for the chorus and the full company; black, white and gray tops for the speeches; full-color costumes for the scenes (to give them a bit of distinction). All of the costumes should be contemporary and in most cases can come from the actor's own wardrobe.

Lighting:

Lighting can be as simple or as complex as you desire. The play has been done successfully in an open space with natural lighting as well as in a fully functional theatre. The lighting should support the play not become the event itself. When touring, a couple of large gelled flashlights placed in the bottom of the witches' drum will provide great up-lighting and can also be used to supply the side-light for the Hal/Hotspur fight.

Sound/Music:

As you see from the text a great deal of music is called for and yet I do not specify what type of music. I feel that the music should be chosen to fit your audience. It should be contemporary to them and each piece of music should reflect the feeling of the scene it bookends. I think music is very important to the production even if it is only coming from a portable sound system or boom box.

Direct Address:

During the speeches it is paramount that the actors are coached to talk directly to the audience. The speeches are an important communication from the character to the viewer and are not some sort of inner monologue being recited aloud. This is why I ask for the houselights to be up a bit during the speeches, so that the actors can see the faces of the people they are addressing.

Heightened Verse:

A great deal of the text in this play is poetic. Don't let your actors shy away from the poetry, have them embrace the heightened nature of the text and use the words to their advantage. One note I seem to give over and over again when dealing with verse is "slow down"—we need to hear the words in order to understand them.

Overall Approach:

Finally, a sense of fun throughout, especially from the chorus, makes the production a joy to watch. When it comes right down to it, we are doing a "play" not a "serious."